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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken in 16 rural New York school districts to determine the feasibility of sharing noninstructional services as an avenue to achieving cost savings and enhanced services. The districts involved were within the Delaware/Chenango/Madison/Otsego BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) in a rural mountainous region of central New York. Districts ranged in size from 350-2500 students, with the median about 1100. In each district, at least four meetings were held--with administrators, supervisors of support services, board of education members, and local government officials and community members. Participants were interviewed and completed surveys to identify services that lend themselves to sharing, areas of concern in the sharing of services, and existing areas of sharing. Areas of focus were the business office, transportation, cafeteria, and operations and maintenance. Many school districts were already sharing limited services with local governments on an informal basis. Most obstacles to sharing involved local "politics." Recommendations offer three options for making changes: immediate improvements, a holistic approach to sharing, and redesign of service systems. Appendices contain profiles of three consultants involved in the study, the interview schedule, and summaries of related research in New York and seven other states and provinces. (SV)

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Potential Savings in Rural Public School Non-Instructional Costs through Shared Services Arrangements: A Regional Study



Lead Agency: Oxford Academy and Central
Schools — in cooperation with 16 participating
school districts in the Delaware/Chenango/
Madison/Otsego BOCES

Sponsored by:
NYS Rural Education Advisory Committee

Prepared by: ECM, Inc.
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in Rural Public School
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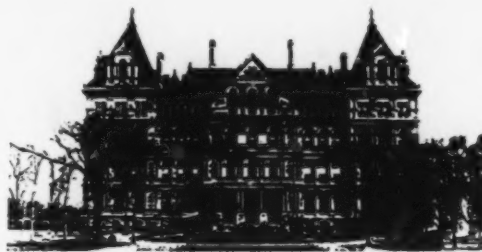
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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	i
Letter from Senator Charles D. Cook.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Study Purpose.....	vii
Methodology.....	ix
 Executive Summary.....	 1
 Interview/Survey Data Highlights.....	 5
 Summary of Interview/Survey Findings.....	 13
 Recommendations.....	 17
Summary.....	26
 Appendix A/Consultants.....	 27
 Appendix B/Interview Schedule.....	 33
 Appendix C/Research Summary.....	 37

INTRODUCTION



December, 1997

To the Reader:

This report presents the findings of a study undertaken by sixteen rural schools in the Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego BOCES to determine the feasibility of sharing non-instructional services as an avenue to achieving cost savings and enhanced services. Monies saved on non-instructional costs could then be targeted to instructional programs. The schools expect that their experience with non-instructional shared services will pave the way for additional cooperative efforts in instructional areas as well.

I commend the rural schools for undertaking this effort and the state legislature and Rural Education Advisory Committee for helping fund the project. The study reveals an increased awareness and willingness in many school districts and municipalities to collaborate in the provision of non-instructional services.

The study shows that many of the participating school districts already cooperate among themselves and with their respective towns and villages in providing services. Many examples of existing areas where services and facilities are shared as well as others they note as worthy of further consideration are identified. The report also shows that geographic and infrastructure barriers or impediments prohibit certain types of shared services and facilities in rural areas at this time.

It is intended that this report serve as a basis for follow up among the participating schools and municipalities on specific initiatives they may undertake. It is also hoped their efforts will assist schools and municipalities in other regions of the state to draw from the experiences and perspectives found in this report in undertaking shared services in their communities.

Sincerely,

Senator Charles D. Cook
Chairman
Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

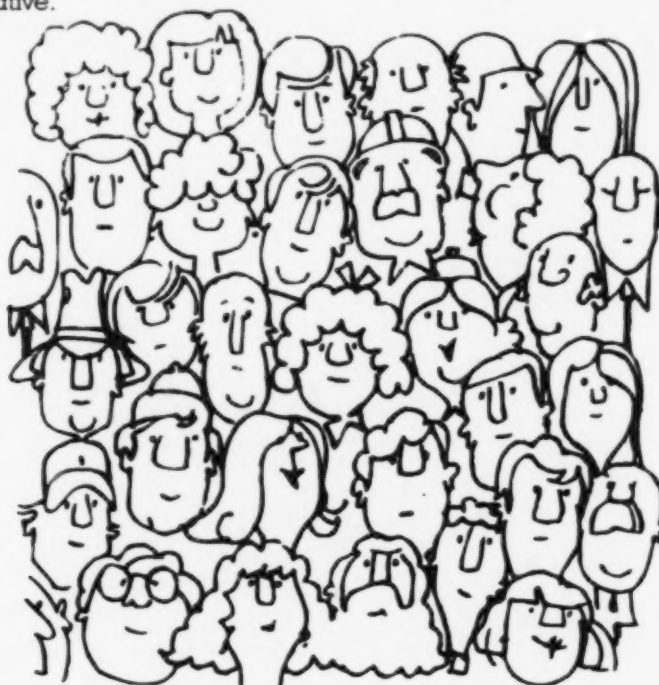
With special appreciation to Gray Stevens, Superintendent of Oxford Academy and Central Schools for his efforts in making this study happen.

Excellent cooperation was received from all parties involved in scheduling and participating in the interviews and survey. Thank you to each of the following people who gave extra time in the interviews, gathered and gave information, background, and showed support throughout the entire process:

Afton
Bainbridge-Guilford
Downsville
Franklin
Gilbertsville-Mt. Upton
Greene
Hancock
Norwich
Otselic Valley
Oxford Academy
Sherburne-Earlville
Sidney
Unadilla Valley
Unatego
Walton
Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego BOCES

Vernice N. Church
Robert W. Murphy
Roger A. Hutchinson
Douglas W. Ido
Douglas Exley
Kenneth E. Harrington
Richard Dillon
Robert L. Cleveland
Linda Morse Taylor
Grayson Stevens
V. Donald DuBois
Dominic A. Nuciforo, Sr.
Roger Adams
R. Fred McCaffrey
George F. Mack, Ph.D.
Alan D. Pole
Deedrick Bertholf

Also, many unnamed people were responsible for all the details of meetings and sending to ECM INC. all the essential information needed to prepare this report. To all these people we are deeply appreciative.



STUDY PURPOSE:



As a result of decreased levels of revenue, there is an increased awareness of the need to collaborate in order to provide the quality and quantity of services required by the school districts.

The goal was to explore the sixteen component school districts, their adjoining municipalities and the private sector, to provide measurable data to support or disprove the need for sharing services.

Areas of focus:

- ➡ Business Office
- ➡ Transportation
- ➡ Cafeteria
- ➡ Operations and Maintenance

The desired outcome is to identify shared, consolidated or reorganized systems which will provide quality service without increasing the tax burden, while maintaining autonomy.

Specific objectives:

- ➡ Maintain autonomy of each district
- ➡ Any savings would be used to enhance academic programs
- ➡ Control time of students being transported
- ➡ Emotional concerns
- ➡ Identify specific issues of concern
- ➡ Identify specific resources that can be shared
- ➡ Effect on tax rates, present and future
- ➡ Level of community involvement and commitment

METHODOLOGY

The primary methods of collecting data were through interviews and survey responses.

Three consultants were scheduled for one full day at each school district. At least four sets of meetings were planned for each district.



1. Superintendent and Administrators
2. Management services supervisors
3. Board members
4. Town and village officials and other community members.

Second visits were made to two districts to accommodate government officials in those districts. Surveys were returned from districts, giving additional information. From all of this data and additional research, a summary report with recommendations was developed.

It must be understood that the study was designed to be completed within a narrow time frame. Thus, these findings are not presented as the result of an in-depth, lengthy research project. Rather, with the time and resources available, the consultants endeavored to take a snapshot of the districts with the aim of coordinating the information gathered from several perspectives. It is possible to make some meaningful observations and some logical recommendations. In that spirit, we offer what may be useful and fresh insights. Perhaps most valuable for districts will be the raising of questions which they will be able to answer for themselves, drawing upon a new perspective.

Appendix B shows the interview schedule and groups involved for each of the participating school districts and BOCES. Typically, a whole day was devoted to each school district. Interviews were held with school boards, school superintendents and principals, and supervisors of support services in the areas of buildings and grounds, business office, cafeteria, purchasing, and transportation. Additionally, town and village officials, union reps, and community members were interviewed. In both the schools and communities, the range of participants varied from district to district. Participants were also invited to complete paper surveys to:

- ** Identify services that lend themselves to sharing and may provide improvement and cost savings;
- ** areas of concern in the sharing of services; and
- ** list existing areas of government/business/school sharing.

In all, 120 survey forms were completed and returned as follows: Afton (15); Bainbridge-Guilford (12); Downsville (7); Franklin (9); Gilbertsville-Mt.Upton (7); Greene (10); Hancock (5); Norwich (5); Otselec (8); Oxford (19); Sherburne-Earlville (2); Sidney (13); Unadilla Valley (3); Unatego (4); and Walton (1).

The data obtained from the interviews and completed surveys was then compiled and analyzed by the ECM consultant team as summarized in this report. The consultants also conducted a search of the literature for relevant sources of information on such collaborations, with some of the more notable examples included in Appendix C.

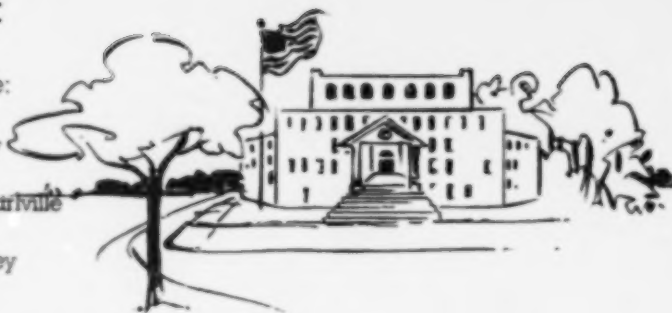
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The districts involved in this study were:

Afton
Bainbridge-Guilford
Downsville
Franklin
Gilbertsville-Mount Upton
Greene
Hancock
Norwich

Otselic Valley
Oxford
Sherburne-Earlville
Sidney
Unadilla Valley
Unatego
Walton
Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego BOCES



Experiential Consultants in Management, Inc. (ECM) examined the feasibility of sharing, consolidating or reorganizing the non-instructional services between school districts, as well as, towns, villages, local businesses and others to improve services without placing an increased burden on the local property taxpayer. Many of the school districts are presently sharing limited services with local governments on a "hand shake" basis. Many of the obstacles to sharing or consolidation are the "politics" involved between towns, villages, and counties. These and others will be addressed in the report.

As the study progressed, education and curriculum issues were raised. These are accepted as part of the process and addressed as a means of developing future sharing of services through educational collaboration.

Three approaches have been developed:

1. **Immediate implementation**
Stay within each existing district and examine what is currently in place. To improve service through the use of additional community opportunities, through the involvement of parents, business and industry, college and university, community groups, school board and administration, and other resources to improve quality of service.
2. **Holistic approach**
Look at all the districts involved and examine what each individual school district has to offer. Build on sharing of cafeteria, transportation, garage facilities, maintenance, building and grounds, and other services.
3. **Redesign of the service system**
Explore what is happening in education around New York State and the United States and take the best ideas to service the system. Redesign the school operation by examining legislative changes, the use of centralized purchasing, automated cafeteria systems, leasing of buildings built by private venture, private organizations and reshape what is done today to improve for the future.

The above is further developed in the study.

Interview/Survey Data Highlights

INTERVIEW/SURVEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

School districts participating in the study ranged in size from 350 to 2500 students, with the median about 1100. The districts cover a geographic territory which includes parts of four very large, rural counties (larger than many whole states); stretching from the western edge of the Catskill Mountains, on one end, to central New York, on the other.

School bus fleets are all district-owned and managed and range in size from 12 to 34 vehicles and from 14 drivers and mechanics to 39; in all, involving about 320 people. Not all drivers are full-time. Practically no use is made of computer scheduling software.

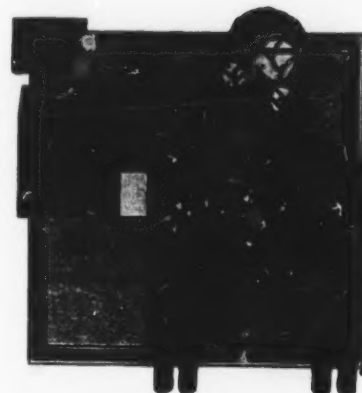
The number of cafeteria personnel is about 160, with all districts providing both breakfast and lunch programs for students, including free/reduced price meals. The proportion of the student body served lunch ranges between 50 to 80 percent.

The number of buildings and grounds personnel range between 4 and 34, with a total of about 200 full- and part-time people. Most districts rely on part-time personnel to supplement a largely full-time staff.

The business offices are also mostly staffed with full-time people, with a total of about 38 employees.

Most school districts make use of various BOCES services and several use outside contracts for services as well.

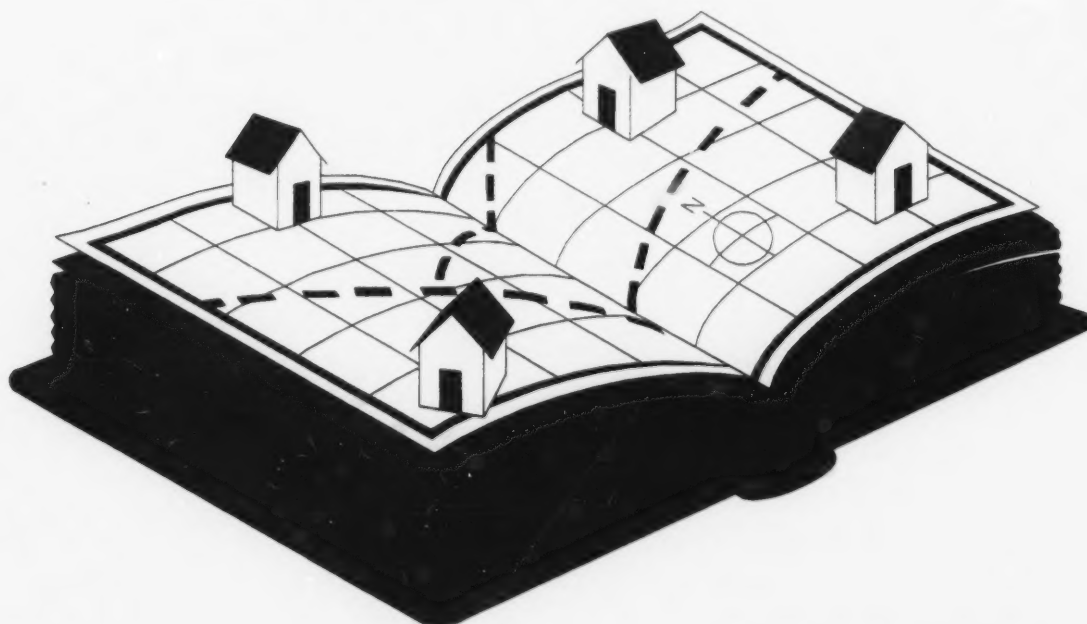
Existing cooperative sharing arrangements for services (including both formal and informal) vary significantly between districts. There was about an even split between formal and informal ("hand-shake") shared service arrangements reported by participants, with the total being 275. In practice, it is more typical that local shared service arrangements be informal in nature.



INTERVIEW/SURVEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

INTERVIEW DATA

- New discoveries between towns, villages and district for immediate sharing and cooperation.
- Awareness of cooperative activities that are happening and are not documented.
- Findings in one district that can be implemented in other districts.
- Existing sharing among district previously unreported.
- In some areas, an organization's priorities took precedence over efficiency and sharing.
- Great pride in successful cooperative efforts.
- Strong community support for school activities.
- District facilities well-used by community.
- Industry and business involved and sharing in district efforts.
- BOCES services well-utilized by districts.



INTERVIEW/SURVEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

SURVEY DATA — SERVICES THAT MAY BE SHARED (TO PROVIDE IMPROVEMENT AND COST SAVINGS)

- Social work
- Grounds maintenance
- Custodial
- Work bays and room for mechanic
- Technical test equipment
- Paint bays
- Steam cleaning areas
- Substitute bus drivers
- Mowing
- Pick up of government food
- County/State Social Services collaboration
- Distance learning
- Childcare counseling
- Printing
- Cafeteria management
- Oil and filter removal
- Sharing with Town & Village - E-mail and Internet
- Health Office
- Drivers Education
- Fleet maintenance
- Co-op. purchasing with Town & Village
- Consolidating garages
- Consolidating fuel purchase and filling area
- Consolidating purchase of tires
- Cooperative bank effort to collect taxes and give reports
- Vehicle maintenance/repair
- Coordinated bus scheduling
- Health insurance consortium
- Combining of clerical/custodial/maintenance services within districts
- Outside tire repair service
- Computerized record keeping
- Shared Business Manager
- Outside contractors for similar services
- Cooperative food bidding
- Garbage services bidding
- Bidding and transporting supplies
- Contracting out to bus companies
- Contract with local hospital staff for OT, physicals, etc.

BOCES Specific:

- Employee Relations — effective, informative and inexpensive.
- Staff development workshops
- Others

INTERVIEW/SURVEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

SURVEY DATA — AREAS OF CONCERN

- Not doing enough sharing
- Priority of service
- Equipment not available when needed
- Delays in resolving situation
- Who gets best part of sharing
- Legal issues
- 4 towns, 2 counties, 1 village and several districts — who's in charge?
- No one takes initiative
- Turf questions
- SED regulations
- Difficulty of mingling funds
- Computers not compatible for joining
- Loss of jobs
- Loss of pride
- Loss of flexibility in job assignments
- Not understood by taxpayers
- Liability
- Logistics
- Union issues
- Territorialism
- Having to rely on somebody else
- Loss of in-house management
- Loss of control
- Job quality
- Loss of authority
- Loss of identity
- Hurts local economy
- Cost more
- Finding people who will work in more than one district
- Travel time
- All districts not on same schedule
- Lack of local input
- Instant access to information not available
- Insurance costs
- Condition of equipment/cost of replacement/who pays?
- Village taxpayers feel unfair because benefits taxpayers outside village
- Loss of service with interrupted schedules
- Get short end of stick
- Disorganization
- Pay for services already receiving
- Loss of in-house expertise when position eliminated
- Good programs could be watered down

BOCES specific:

- If BOCES aid is removed, printing services will probably not remain competitive.
- Copy machine maintenance

INTERVIEW/SURVEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS

SURVEY DATA — EXISTING AREAS OF GOVERNMENT/BUSINESS/SCHOOL SHARING

VILLAGE/TOWN SHARING WITH DISTRICT

- Salt and cindering
- Backhoe work
- Trucking soil and gravel
- Paving small areas
- Remove snow
- Provide manpower in emergencies
- Tractor for field work
- Money to keep pool open in summer
- Fuel tanks
- Electric Dept. - lighting replacement
- Water/sewer repair
- Community built school baseball field
- Community effort for athletic field, indoor pool and 10 classrooms
- Parking lot
- Inmates do maintenance/cleanup
- Community park for school use

SCHOOL DISTRICT SHARING WITH OTHERS

- Walk program
- Swimming
- Small snow plowing when needed
- Exchange of tools and mechanic
- Assist in vehicle repairs
- Athletic field
- Cafeteria for community functions
- Transportation for summer programs
- Gym used for community recreation
- YMCA After-school Program
- Joint funding for Recreation Commission
- FAX machine
- Available meeting spaces

OTHER DISTRICTS

- Adult Education program
- Food services management
- Equipment

BOCES' effectiveness

Most effective:

- Legal services
- Library
- Bus Driver Training
- Staff Development
- Cooperative bidding, not purchasing

Not as effective:

- Co-op purchasing with BOCES — didn't save enough to recover the \$500 fee.
- Special Ed travel (up to 2 hours)
- Staff Development for support staff
- Central Business Office
- Distance Learning
- Response time

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW/SURVEY FINDINGS

SUMMARY of INTERVIEW/SURVEY FINDINGS

Many of the districts are already at a high level of cooperation with their respective towns and/or villages in regard to sharing of services, facilities, equipment, and other resources. It was difficult for some of those who were interviewed to give examples of sharing and collaboration because their perception over the years has become one of "that's the way we always have done it" or "why would we want to do it any other way?" There are also districts with minimum amounts of sharing and collaboration due mainly to a local historical perspective or limited available resources. More specifically:

- ⇒ There is little evidence of any formal preventative maintenance programs in place, except heating, ventilation, and air conditioning.
- ⇒ A prevailing fear of loss of jobs would be the immediate and only result of sharing/collaborating. This perception is fed by rumors of budget cuts, district mergers, real experiences from actual mergers, even though the mergers took place many years ago.
- ⇒ There is a concern that sharing/collaborating will actually make people and services less available.
- ⇒ A sense of loss of priority for work getting done in a shared/collaborative manner. A concern that it will be difficult to maintain "equity" for the participants.
- ⇒ Little if any use of software programs to support efficient transportation routing, scheduling, and maintenance.
- ⇒ In most districts there is a redundancy in fuel storage facilities of the district and the municipalities and no apparent plan in place to develop common/shared facilities.
- ⇒ No evidence of any district sharing or collaborating with county or state highway garages for fuels, sand, salt or maintenance.
- ⇒ A concern that members of the community will misunderstand sharing/collaborating as improper use of people and equipment.
- ⇒ Redundance of some facilities (libraries, garages, fuel depots) and services (business office activities).
- ⇒ There does not appear to be any system of performance review in place that is functioning as required for the district support staff and employees.
- ⇒ While there is evidence of technology throughout the BOCES District, it varied from little evidence, except in the business office, to well-equipped facilities, proper staff and well-defined programs.
- ⇒ There is a considerable amount of travel for some of the students. The remoteness of some of the districts to the programs or activities their students must participate in creates a hardship for the outlying districts.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

ECM INC. recommends: working as independent districts, combining services, staff, administration with neighboring schools to reduce cost; forming joint ventures with municipalities, business, industry and universities where possible and providing better services. Where cost savings are produced in one area, investments can be made in another area, but maintaining a tight control on expenses and holding the line on taxes. . . . In examining all the data, ECM INC. offers three options for making change:

The nature of the study, at first blush, would lead to the conclusion that merger is the way to go. However, the national trend is not bigness. . . . it is small schools working together, maintaining identity, providing world class education.

- ➡ Immediate improvements: Suggestions are given to overcome important existing conditions.
- ➡ Holistic approach: Suggestions are given for improving services through sharing, formulating new ventures from existing situations, neighboring schools working together. . . .
- ➡ Redesign of service systems: Research information (See Appendix C) is offered to provide input for major future changes. This area is not intended to challenge existing policies, union contracts, state laws; it is to create "out-of-the-box" thinking; to look at what is happening today in New York State and other parts of the country; to recognize the power of a grassroots approach; to sit back and let new ideas rise to the surface . . . to harness the superintendents of all districts involved into a creative thinking team; to create a new entrepreneurial approach to education . . . not big, but efficient . . . not merged, but sharing, trusting, building.

Action: Making Smart Choices for New York School Districts

- ➡ The State Education Department and a special Statewide Advisory Committee on School District Reorganization sought to determine whether the state's policy preference of consolidation of districts is always the best answer to the problem. Sharing of services and resources across districts and between districts and businesses, municipalities, and colleges, is a viable alternative to consolidation. One promising option involved creating federations of school districts. In this plan, individual school districts are maintained and retain local control of the academic program, but a federation board makes decisions affecting groups of districts. Districts of varying sizes and those in rural areas can benefit by the cost savings which can result from such collaborative efforts.

While some of the following recommendations may appear to be instructional in nature, they are included as a means of enrolling all members of the community in a sharing, collaborating effort. The intent is to create activities, programs, or other resources that do not otherwise exist. ECM Inc. is providing input and encouraging "out-of-the-box" and "Blue Sky" thinking. The rest is up to the sixteen participating schools and their local communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENTS

➡ Communication with the district community.

Involvement of the community with a school district hinges on the district's ability to keep the community informed. Information will cause both positive and negative response. It does bring out involvement!! In a similar 1997 study conducted in the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES for sixteen other school districts, ECM INC. found community involvement as follows:

85.43% feel the community is not involved or somewhat.
7.81% of the respondents feel the community is totally involved.

77.6% of the respondents feel not involved or are to some extent involved.
16.49% feel totally involved.

83.04% of the local colleges/universities feel somewhat involved.
06.16% of these feel totally involved in the schools.

65.41% of the respondents feel not at all or somewhat welcome at school.
28.22% feel welcome at the school.

81.06% of the business and industry feel not involved or only to some extent with education.
06.62% feel involved.

56.02% of those responding feel that the NY State Education is somewhat involved.
31.62% feel they are involved.

An average of 14% feel the community is involved with school districts.

The perception of those completing the survey is that the involvement of the community or of the individual is low; that the school districts are independent and the majority of the communities allow the district to operate independently of the community.

In another 1997 study in the Lake Forest School District, ECM INC. found that only 30% felt comfortable communicating with the Board and 34% with the Superintendent. Another important finding in this study was that among individuals without children only 9% felt the communication was open and honest.

The need to communicate with the community is of prime importance. Develop better use of existing technology in support of communicating throughout the districts and with the communities. More extensive networking and use of E-mail and the Internet will provide more timely and useful information. Re-evaluate newsletters as a means of getting information to groups. Perhaps a BOCES District newsletter or a BOCES insert in a District newsletter. A column on special features of sharing or business involvement could be offered. This could serve as a career/occupational opportunity for students, as well; a second benefit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENTS (Continued)

⇒ Collaboration with Business, Industry

Partnership in education becomes a partnership in sharing services. Business, Education Council (BEC) of Chenango-Delaware Counties, is an example of a private organization working with industry, business and education to develop better cooperation. Their mission statement is: *"The Chenango-Delaware Business Education Council provides leadership to form coalitions among business, education and community by fostering cooperative interaction to promote changes contributing to a productive future and an enhanced quality of life."*

⇒ District Purchasing

Automate the purchasing activities at all districts. Reasonably priced software is available that creates requisitions, the purchase order, receiving reports, and interacts with the budget system to provide real time management reports. Some applications include inventory processes that support building and grounds custodial/maintenance activities, cafeteria programs, and educational resource inventories.

Cooperative Purchasing group in the northern part of Maine (ECO 2000) - over the past four years members have participated in joint purchasing of materials and supplies. Significant savings have been realized.

⇒ Local Collaboration

At present, discussions developed during an interview at one of the school districts with a school district, post office, village to build a civic center on school grounds. It would contain - Post Office, Fire Department, School recreation center, sport center. Funds -- U.S. Government, Village, Town, Fire Department. Great potential . . . A hidden benefit of this type of collaboration would be the schools' involvement with other staff, staff training and closeness to first responders as well as first responders training.

⇒ Computer Review

Availability and access to personal computers and the advantages they represent needs to be addressed through a systematic review of what each district is doing now and has plans to do in the future. Hardware and software should be identified by type and age, leased or purchased, and the programs they support. Who is the equipment available to and when? Separate the business office equipment and programs from the classroom education applications. This information would allow better purchasing decisions to be made by combining district needs. It could also provide a BOCES District-wide maintenance opportunity.

⇒ BOCES

BOCES is in an ideal position to 'develop regional strategies'. BOCES may serve as a vehicle to encourage collaboration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOLISTIC APPROACH

➡ Transportation Cost

This may be an option as BOCES State aid for services is reduced. . . BOCES, through their computer centers, could play an important part in transportation. They could provide computerized scheduling, bus routes, bus stops, students' list by bus, without getting into transportation. The purchase of one or many commercial computer systems could be incorporated. Application of centralized software programs at BOCES would provide better control and greater efficiencies while allowing the individual districts to maintain their autonomy. Examples of this would be:

Transportation - routing and scheduling would reveal redundancies, create relay opportunities for some routes, reveal in peripheral districts, that a more efficient alternative would be to send some students to "outside" districts for certain programs through reciprocal arrangements, and provide vehicle preventative maintenance reports to the individual districts.

BOCES could become the logical computer center for mapping bus routes, bus stops, reduce duplication of bus routes. Combining neighboring districts to reduce transportation time. The districts could maintain their own bus fleets but scheduling done through BOCES, including bus maintenance scheduling. Sample of a computer programs is ECOTRAN's Map Net Plus and MPM4-Vehicle Maintenance System.

Local districts offer transportation and BOCES a product to the district that does the mapping. Savings: one mapping system instead of 18.

The districts having the buses would all be part of this system. Neighboring schools would combine efforts. The following is a 1995 school bus transportation review from Newfoundland, Canada.

➡ Communication

Create a task force to explore the whole area of communication technology. Items to be investigated should include, but not be limited to:

- what is available from Albany; broadcasts, resources, finances;
- what is currently available that supports effective communication and is it accessible to all districts, a.e., telephone lines, cable networks, satellite and digital applications;
- linking all districts through some form of technology to allow central broadcasting of both visual and audio programs;
- consider development of a unique program(s) that could be broadcast to fee paying subscribers outside the district;
- centralize library resources for schools and municipalities;
- use of satellite technology for tracking/communicating with vehicles including district as well as County and State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOLISTIC APPROACH (Continued)

⇒ Internship

Internship is a logical way to offer business and industry a spirit of cooperation that can lead to sharing of services, equipment and information.

Develop an extensive internship program for students to include colleges, industry, government, schools, hospital, nursing homes, transportation companies, postal service airports. State Police, local police, emergency service providers, prisons and local jails. This will create an economical means of career exploration for the student and an opportunity for the business sector to interact with the educational process.

⇒ Sending Teachers to Students

Find ways to bring the programs to the students instead of sending the students to the programs. More and better applications of teleconferencing, distance learning initiatives and other applications of technology should be explored. There seems to be a complacency in some districts toward this approach. It is not suggested that this means of instructional delivery replace what is presently taking place; rather it becomes an adjunct resource in support of existing programs, a resource that could reduce or eliminate the need to transport some students long distances and for long periods of time. Consider wider use of paraprofessionals at remote sites in support of this method of course delivery. There may be instances where it is more practical to send the teacher to the students instead of the reverse.

⇒ Distance Learning

BOCES as a center and tied in with all schools; become part of a university Internet system or video conferencing and use them as a center. The cost of Distance Learning can be offset with grants, and industry grants. A shared decision making team of business people, Board Members, parents, teachers could work on developing a total plan. *Example: Potsdam School Media Center, Potsdam, New York, uses Potsdam State University College Internet allowing students to Email could be used as part of a study.*

Eleven school districts in Maine got together and outfitted a number of school buses as computer labs. These move with the teacher between rural schools offering special programs and distance learning to small groups of children.

⇒ Shared Centralized Fueling

Compliance with the E.P.A. requirements for fuel storage, effective December 1998, will cause some locations to abandon their facilities and buy from a local retailer. Abandoning a fuel site to E.P.A. standards does not mean putting a lock on the pumps. The abandoned tanks must be dug up and disposed of properly. This can be an expensive proposition, depending on the age and condition of the tanks and their influence on the ground water. As fueling depots are upgraded, combined or replaced, card access tracking software could be included to provide security and data necessary to support fuel purchases for all participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOLISTIC APPROACH (Continued)

➡ Cafeteria Program

Cafeteria programs — food and other products can be purchased, tracked and distributed through a centralized system. Individual meals can be accounted for while providing a measure of security through the use of prepaid credit cards. Management reports could be available to the districts to assist in purchasing and budget decisions. Neighboring schools could join together to purchase one system and network menus, etc.

➡ Building Maintenance

Neighboring districts can join together to purchase software. Develop a protocol for district wide preventative maintenance program. The absence of such a program at most of the districts has seen the slow erosion of the physical plants and other elements of the district infrastructure. The investment in small, incremental steps taken in advance, rather than wait for breakdowns or the need to replace, has always been shown to be a more cost effective approach. Over time this will minimize capital spending to expansion rather than replacement.

REDESIGN OF SERVICE SYSTEMS

The objective of this study is to improve management services between the 16 school districts involved in the study. It is ECM's intent to bring to the attention of the Superintendents various ideas that can be the basis for changes, if well planned. The 16 School Superintendents and the BOCES District Superintendent as a team are capable of moving into a totally new experience. Why BOCES as a partner with 16 superintendents? In BOCES we have an organization at the center of all school activities. BOCES gives districts a united voice. . . .

"Perhaps one of the most important features of BOCES is that it provides component districts with a process of cooperative planning by giving administrators and staff greater opportunities to share concerns, ideas, information and solutions. Through the State Education Department and other sources, BOCES keep abreast of new regulations, societal and educational trends and regional issues. BOCES can give local districts a united voice in addressing these issues." — New York State School Board Association — 3/10/97

BOCES major thrust is in education. Management services have developed over the years. The present governor and the New York State legislature are closely examining the area of service and are looking to decrease State education costs. This will require school districts to find other methods of improving service and reducing cost.

To help the team with its change potential and new direction, we would like to point out that laws are written to be changed, improved or modified if the desire is there. These changes, improvements and modifications need not be changed nationally, in New York State, but can be done locally. . . . Example of local change:

RECOMMENDATIONS

REDESIGN OF SERVICE SYSTEMS (Continued)

⇒⇒ Niagara Falls District granted 'home rule' Wicks Law exemption (09/23/96). Although statewide reform of the Wicks Law was ignored by the Legislature in 1996, 'home-rule' legislation was enacted at the local level with significant implications for the contracting and construction of a school facility in the Niagara Falls City School District. Signed into law by Gov. George Pataki on August 8, Chapter 562 of the Laws of 1996.

⇒⇒ Niagara Falls contracts with Honeywell Corp. to build a \$50 million new school and lease to Niagara Falls with no increase in school taxes — a first for New York State.

⇒⇒ In Maine, ECO-2000, a Private Corporation, is doing similar things that BOCES does in New York State. A private not-for-profit corporation composed of 11 school superintendents was formed in the State of Maine under Sec. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. ECO-2000 was formed in 1992 with the purpose of linking small school systems with similar problems and goals, enabling them to function as a single collaboration. ECO pools fiscal and human resources to improve the operational efficiency of each individual member. This could be a model for BOCES Management Services.

⇒⇒ Deregulation

Deregulation by district:

⇒⇒ Draft a charter that would establish the need to deregulate a district and establish criteria for measuring improvement.

⇒⇒ Petition the State legislature to support deregulation.

Deregulation by BOCES district:

Create a proper group to draft a charter that would allow the BOCES District to become "deregulated" for three years. This would essentially be asking Albany to allow you to operate free of existing regulations, restrictions and mandates so long as your objectives were consistent with educational goals set by the State. The draft would include your expectations, how they would be achieved, the savings to be realized and how you feel the student and the community would benefit from this kind of arrangement.

⇒⇒ Performance Evaluation

Institute a performance evaluation for support staff. It is an inexpensive investment that can pay big dividends. It should not be tied to monetary reward. It should provide in a performance review setting, an opportunity for the individual to be made aware of what they did well and the areas they need to improve. A mutually agreed plan as to how the individual fits into the system and where the growth opportunities may be that will benefit both the individual and the district. It has been shown to be an excellent feedback mechanism and the source of some very creative suggestions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

REDESIGN OF SERVICE SYSTEMS (Continued)

Non-instructional services for education have opponents to the change effort. Still, sharing of such services is a change whose time has come and may be the easiest to make. It has grass roots support.

SUMMARY

ECM has offered three basic approaches to improving the delivery of non-instructional services.

The level of communication, and local government flexibility, cooperation, trust, and collaboration required, increases proportionately as the merits of each of the approaches are examined. It also stands to reason that the level of risk will increase as the districts move from the first approach to the second and then the third. Moreover, the rewards will be commensurate with the level of risk and commitment the districts are willing to take. If they take the first approach they will create modest outcomes, because the overriding force will not be improving the service experience, but the preservation of the districts' autonomy. There is little risk involved in this approach and it is a safe choice.

If they choose either the second or the third approach, they will need to enroll the entire community in the process, especially the third approach. Make the community a part of the solution, don't just see them as voters; see them as a functional part of the educational process by involving them with the development of the solutions so they will want to own the outcomes, good or bad. Push the ownership out to the community.

Appendix A Consultants

Consultants

WALTER J. SKOPOW, Vice President/Project Manager

Education

McKendree College, Lebanon, IL - Bachelor of Business Administration
College of Advanced Traffic and Transportation, Chicago

Professional Experience

Mr. Skopow has a diverse background, both academically and through his work experience that uniquely qualifies him. He is certified by the College of Advanced Traffic and Transportation -Chicago. He was the Assistant General Manager of National Fuel Gas Company, and the Director of Management Development. He is certified by Project Adventure to facilitate Outdoor Based Training and is skilled in either a traditional classroom environment or one that supports experiential training. He draws from personal experience as varied as managing the development of automated material systems, to creation and implementation of complete management training programs, and skills training that satisfies agency mandates.

Mr. Skopow was past President of the Pennsylvania Gas Association, Materials Management Committee; founding member and past chairman of NYSPUTA; was keynote speaker at annual meetings for New England Gas Association, Pennsylvania Gas Association, and American Gas Association Material Management Committee. He has been published by the American Gas Association in the field of materials management and has served as an expert panelist at Syracuse University Transportation Seminar for State and Federal Regulatory Staff.

PRESENTATION TOPICS

Planning, a Linear Versus a Holistic Approach

When we approach the planning process do we use a linear approach or do we (perhaps unconsciously) lean toward a holistic approach? What difference does it make in the outcomes and what is a holistic approach anyway?

Stress Awareness

Improving your stress awareness capabilities can increase personal and business productivity, enhance your sense of emotional well being, and strengthen your relationship with family, friends and co-workers.

Efficiency Studies Project Manager

Alexander Central School District; Grand Island Central School District; Patchogue-Medford UFSD; St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES (14 Districts)

Consultants

RAYMOND A. BINIS, Senior Project Consultant

Chairman of the Board of ECM INC. Experiential Consultants in Management, Inc. is a firm dedicated to improvement.

Mr. Binis was the Director of the Management Development Center at the University of Cincinnati and the Director of the Management Center for NYSSILR, Cornell University. He was previously the Assistant Vice President of Corporate Training for Marine Midland Bank. Mr. Binis held important management positions with Continental Can, Spaulding Fibre and ACF Industries. He is an innovator and implementor of new practices, advanced procedures, and skilled in management. He is Past President and a past member of the Board of Trustees of the Creative Education Foundation.

Mr. Binis is the author of a book, "Avoiding Confusion When Selecting an External Consultant," four books on Continuous Quality Improvement, and of many articles such as, "More Than Impression, Employee Involvement is a Successful Reality," "Task Forces Maintain Movement Towards New Direction," "Evaluating the Training Process," and "Creativity Quality, A Natural Combination."

He is consultant to education, banking, health care, industry and government, and has presented workshops and executive consulting nationwide on problem solving, Total Quality/Continuous Improvement, team building, management development, time management, supervisory skills and labor relations.

Mr. Binis received his B.S. in Psychology at New York State University College at Fredonia and his Master's Degree in Behavior Sciences at New York State University College at Buffalo.

Efficiency Study Grants Manager

Alexander Central School District; Brunswick Central School District; Cohoes City School District; Deer Park UFSD; Grand Island Central School District; Patchogue-Medford Union Free School District; Ramapo Central School District; St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES (14 Districts); Watkins Glen Central School District; Wappingers Central School District; Wayland-Cohocton Central School District

Consultants

PAULA H. YOUNGS, Senior Project Consultant

Professional Experience

Ms. Youngs is President of ECM INC. She has also been Adjunct Faculty for the Management Development Center, College of Business Administration, University of Cincinnati. She was an Adjunct Faculty Member of the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University. She was President of Rainbow Child Care, Inc. and for five (5) years was a member of a school board, and a teacher for 5 years. She has held management positions in government and health care, as well as in business. Her experience covers a wide range of skills in financial control, budget preparation, personnel management, public relations and advertising.

She conducted and coordinated training programs for Erie County Department of Health as a Public Health Administrator. Some of the programs she has designed and developed for education, business, government agencies, hospitals and health care institutions are in areas of supervision, management, Continuous Quality Improvement, communication, time and stress management, leadership and entrepreneurship. She is registered as an instructor in creative problem solving, and conducts sessions at the Creative Problem Solving Institute.

Ms. Youngs has co-authored six books on Continuous Quality Improvement and the *Power of CQI*. Ms. Youngs has completed graduate work with her research in analysis and surveys. This has proven valuable to her in conducting in-depth organizational analysis and surveys.

Education

Michigan State University, B.S., Education.

New York State University College at Buffalo, M.S., Organization Development.

Efficiency Grant Study Project Manager

Brunswick Central School District; Cohoes City School District; Deer Park UFSD; Grand Island Central School District; Patchogue-Medford Union Free School District; Ramapo Central School District; St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES (14 Districts); Watkins Glen Central School District; Wappingers Central School District; Wayland-Cohocton Central School District

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>PARTICIPANTS</u>
BOCES	BOCES Assistant Superintendent; Management Services; Supervisors of 6 support services: print shop, central business office, HVAC, health and safety, records management, and purchasing.
Walton	Principals and Superintendent; Board of Education Members; Town Supervisor and Highway Superintendent; Management Services Supervisors: buildings and grounds, business office, and cafeteria.
Downsville	Department Heads; Town Supervisor; and Board of Education.
Gilbertsville	Supervisors; Administrators and Board of Education members; Shared Decision Making Team; and Town Supervisors and Mayor.
Unadilla Valley	Administrators; Operations & Maintenance, Transportation, Cafeteria, Business Office; Town and Village Officials; and Board of Education.
Hancock	Supervisors and Middle Managers; Town and Village Board; Local Business; and Board of Education.
Sidney	Central School District Office; Students, Community Members, parents, teachers; town and village officials; operation and maintenance, transportation, cafeteria, business administration office; and Board of Education, principals, supervisors, and Superintendent.
Bainbridge	Superintendent; and Board Members.
Unatego	Board President/Board Member; business office; board/transportation; principals and assistant principals.
Otselic Valley	Board members and others.
Sherburne-Earlville	Superintendent and school board; administration; supervisor; mayor and town supervisors.
Greene	Business Office; Superintendent; Operations & Maintenance; transportation; food service; building principals; town and village; and board of education.
Afton	Board Members; municipal people; management services; and union reps and staff.
Franklin	Superintendent; towns; and others.
Oxford	Management Supervisors; board of education, principals, and business manager; town supervisors and mayors; teacher and education support staff; shared decision making team.
Franklin	Mayor and Superintendent.
Sherburne-Earlville	Superintendent and 13 others (i.e. mayors).

Appendix C

Research Summary

RESEARCH SUMMARY

TRANSPORTATION/BUILDING & GROUNDS/CAFETERIA/PURCHASING

- ➡ *New York's K-12 Public Education in the 21st Century: A Framework for Action*
(Proceedings of 1994 "Vision 21" Education Symposium & Statewide Public Hearings)

Buildings, transportation and equipment are a common bond among the 700+ school districts in New York State. The workgroup's consensus is that in order to anticipate and ultimately meet the needs of our students in the 21st century, we must alter the way we do business. "Business as usual" cannot be our modus operandi. The workgroup identified many strengths which have kept New York State in the forefront of safety. *"We believe it's time to move from merely issuing annual reports on buildings and space requirements to providing substantive and visionary long-range planning. It's time to rethink some elements of our school aid formula in an effort to encourage preventive maintenance at the expense of new construction. While we affirm each state agency's role for helping our educational infrastructure meet a variety of important standards, we believe the time is long overdue for cooperation among these agencies for the development of common and consistent standards, and common and consistent definitions."*

Transportation

- ➡ Require uniform transportation standards for all children in New York State including those with disabilities transported by private providers.
- ➡ Encourage regional and intergovernmental planning which encompasses an entire community focus.
- ➡ Make transportation aid a contingent expense.
- ➡ Revisit existing practices to update for the 21st Century. (Examples: §3635 of the Education Law which prohibits children from being dropped off at a day care facility not located in the district even if the bus drives past that facility; contingent mileage limitations.)
- ➡ Standardize definitions of "school bus" among state agencies such as: The Department of Transportation, the Department of Motor Vehicles, & the Education Department.
- ➡ Eliminate standees on buses and modify the load capacities of school buses.
- ➡ Assure appropriate behavior on school buses to ensure student and driver safety.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

TRANSPORTATION/BUILDING & GROUNDS/CAFETERIA/PURCHASING (Continued)

Equipment

- ⇒ Make it a priority to advance the state of technology and equipment in our schools.
- ⇒ Assure all schools have appropriate instructional equipment.

Buildings

- ⇒ Statewide inventory of educational infrastructure for purpose of statewide planning, with inventory to include number of buildings, structural quality of buildings, ADA compliance, and anticipated needs.
- ⇒ Encourage more cost-effective methods of constructing and renovating school buildings. Repeal the Wicks Law and revise Rule 56, as it relates to floor tiles and roofing material.
- ⇒ Collaboration among agencies and other governmental entities to provide adequate support services to school districts.
- ⇒ Encourage and create collaborative planning for flexible, multi-purpose uses and locations of school buildings.
- ⇒ Assure health and safety standards are applied to schools in a responsible, reasonable means.
- ⇒ Encourage regular and proper preventive maintenance of buildings.
- ⇒ Develop regulations which encourage joint school/business and/or other agency partnerships and ventures.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

TRANSPORTATION/BUILDING & GROUNDS/CAFETERIA/PURCHASING (Continued)

➤ School Bus Transportation Review 1995 Released — Province of Newfoundland

The following is a statement issued by Chris R. Decker, Minister of Education and Training, at a news conference held today at Confederation Building, on School Bus Transportation Review - 1995:

The cost of transportation of students to and from schools represents a significant proportion of the education budget at the K-12 level. The Department of Education and Training currently spends almost \$28 million A about five per cent of the annual K-12 expenditures on school busing.

A total of 12 persons was employed by the department to observe and describe every bus route in the province and to plot, on maps, the number of students picked up at each bus stop, as well as the actual route taken by the bus. Information on the number of buses in use, the duration of bus routes, the distance travelled and the number of single, double and triple runs was also collected in the data gathering process. Data from the individual studies were collated and analyzed to produce a significant review of the entire school bus transportation system in the province of Newfoundland. This is the first major review that has been conducted on school busing. Specific areas of the province have been addressed in the past, however, this is the first provincial review.

Another area examined by the department was the provision of special transportation services within the City of St. John's. The purpose of this study was to again identify opportunities to reduce costs through reorganization.

The total projected savings identified in the report are \$9.5 million. Since an increase in the number of buses making double runs may add some extra costs to the system, it would be unreasonable to expect the full \$9.5 million in savings will be achieved. It is more realistic, however, to err on the cautious side. Therefore, savings in the vicinity of \$7.5 to \$8 million are projected.

To achieve these savings, it has been assumed that:

- Children will be bused to the nearest school only.
- School boards will stagger their opening and closing times of school to achieve greater utilization of the existing bus fleet.
- School busing regulations with respect to the distance criteria, the number of stops per 1.6 km, will be enforced.

➤ VSBA Risk Management Services — State of Virginia

Established in 1987 to provide school boards with group purchasing powers, stability and quality coverage. VSBA offers a comprehensive approach.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

TRANSPORTATION/BUILDING & GROUNDS/CAFETERIA/PURCHASING (Continued)

⇒ School Cafeteria Software

DineRite and DineRite Satellite are software designed for school food service. It's a combination of point of sale and reporting systems for "full service," a Windows '95 tracking and management system, enabling a central "host" system to manage and maintain records and shipments to an unlimited number of "satellite" schools.



⇒ ECO 2000 — State of Maine

Eleven school districts form ECO 2000 Corporation. The purpose of the corporation is organized and operates exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes as an exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. In effect: centralized purchasing for all 11 schools.

"The mission of ECO-2000 is to raise the achievement level of all students to that of world class quality standards while maintaining the identity and characteristics of the rural school system and to do so in an economically efficient manner."



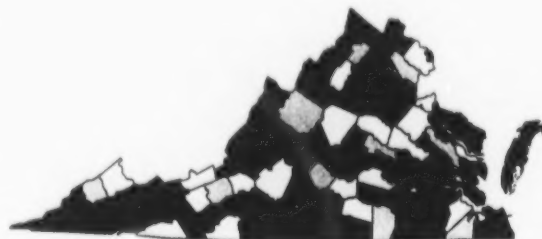
RESEARCH SUMMARY

TRANSPORTATION/BUILDING & GROUNDS/CAFETERIA/PURCHASING (Continued)

➡ County Centralized Purchasing & Accounting — State of Virginia

Clarification of the rights and duties arising under Virginia law when a county board of supervisors implements centralized purchasing and accounting procedures for local entities, including the school board:

A county may compel a school board to join its centralized purchasing and accounting systems. However, the resulting systems must not limit the exclusive authority of the school board to manage and control the property, particularly the funds, of the school division.



Legal parameters for a county bringing a school board within its centralized purchasing and accounting systems:

- School Funds Centralized purchasing and accounting systems cannot alter or diminish the school board's exclusive control over school funds.
- The school board determines what supplies are needed for the management of the schools, and any specifications for those supplies.
- In addition to deciding *what* goods are needed, school boards retain the authority to decide . . . the costs thereof.
- The school board is not required to use the county's central purchasing office for capital improvement contracts.
- Centralized purchasing does not apply . . . to the obtaining of services, regardless of the nature of the services.
- Centralized accounting provided for by Virginia Code & Sect. 15.1-117(17) must be implemented without interfering with school board control of funds.

The most important principle for a school board to remember when adjusting to centralized purchasing and accounting procedures is that the school board retains its exclusive discretionary authority to control school funds only the ministerial aspects of purchasing and accounting are assumed by the county administrator.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

COST MANAGEMENT

➡ National pioneer in innovative cost management system — State of South Carolina

WASHINGTON -- South Carolina was one of two states featured at a U.S. Chamber of Commerce news conference today promoting the In\$ite Financial Analysis Model for education, an innovative new system to track and manage education spending.

South Carolina was one of the first states to test the In\$ite system. in\$ite allows the state, districts and schools to track every dollar allocated for education from federal, state and local sources and explain in clear language where the money goes.

"Our state needed a better awareness of how funds are spent at the district level and in individual schools, because that's the only way to know if we're making decisions that fit specific needs," said State Superintendent of Education Barbara Nielsen, who spoke on the state's behalf at the news conference. "In\$ite is an important management tool for administrators and a good accountability tool for communities because it provides that information in a language we can all understand."

The In\$ite system, previously called the Finance Analysis Model, was piloted and adopted in South Carolina in partnership with the S.C. Chamber of Commerce, the S. C. School Boards Association and seven local school districts.

"The South Carolina Chamber of Commerce and the business community recognize the strong need to have meaningful information about dollars spent in education," said Chamber President and CEO S. Hunter Howard, Jr. "Without such tangible data we can't hope to make the hard financial business decisions that can continue to improve our education product."



RESEARCH SUMMARY

INDUSTRY/BUSINESS/EDUCATION

➡ Business Education Partnership Program — State of South Carolina

The goal of the South Carolina Business Education Partnership program is to foster and support an atmosphere which drives involvement and communication between business and education. The South Carolina Network of Business Partners is the leadership network established to support partnerships in the state. In 1995-96, the Network realigned its goals to support higher academic standards and to prepare communities for economic success. The Network participated in the following activities to promote partnerships.



- Studied the proposed Accountability Act of 1996 and actively participated in the information process and solicitation of opinions and ideas for the Act.
- Promoted technology in schools and supported the South Carolina Information Network Project (SCINET).
- Encouraged greater business involvement in the "Downtown As A Classroom" partnership between business and education in small communities across the state.
- Modeled Greenwood Youth Apprenticeship Program as a statewide example of business/education partnership in support of student involvement "hands-on."

Examples of partnerships which are implemented at the local level are listed below.

- A partnership with the South Carolina Downtown Development Association, the Department of Commerce, the South Carolina Commission on Minority Affairs and the State Department of Education to facilitate conversation in communities that have requested support to improve areas of the community.
- The State Department of Education is in its third year working with the South Carolina Downtown Development Association to implement a program entitled "Downtown As A Classroom." The program established an ongoing dialogue between downtown businesses in small towns and communities across the state and teachers, administrators, and students.

➡ Project Connect — State of New York

Western New York's first fiber optic network for distance learning. A state-of-the-art network utilizing NYNEX fiber optic technology to link city, rural and suburban high schools, Buffalo State College and Western New York Public Broadcasting (WNED-TV) Association.

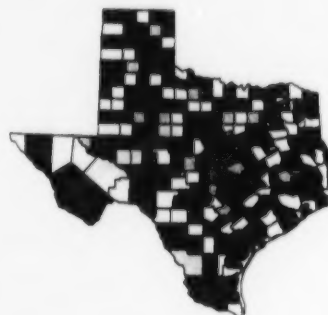


RESEARCH SUMMARY

DEREGULATION/HOME RULE/LAWS/JOINT AGREEMENTS

➡ Local Schools Receive Unprecedented Latitude — State of Texas

Reduce the number and scope of regulations governing education in Texas, giving local school districts and campuses unprecedented latitude in tailoring education programs to meet the specific needs of their students. In 1995, for example, the legislature enacted Senate Bill 1, a major rewrite of the state's education code that returned much decision-making responsibility to local education authorities.



➡ School Board News — State of New York

Niagara Falls District generates "Home Rule" exemption state wide reform or Wicks Law as ignored by legislation in 1996, home rule was enacted at the local level. Legislation authorizes Niagara Falls District to construct one school building. The new law:

- Permits district award through RFP's rather than competitive bidding.
- Contract awarded to the current previewed representative under the law.
- District eligible to receive state building aid.
- Exempts construction project from multiple-contractor mandates of the Wicks Law.



All eyes on plan for privately owned public school. Buffalo Evening News 6/2/97. Niagara Falls plans to break ground for New York's first privately owned public school. Replace an existing school with no increase in taxes. Honeywell of Minneapolis to build a \$50 million super school. At the end of a 30-year lease the corporation will still own the building.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

AUTONOMY

Support for leaving districts as they are,
but encouraging sharing of services.

➡ Making Smart Choices for School Districts — State of New York

There are some 715 separate school districts in New York about one-third of which have fewer than 1,000 students each from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Each of these districts has its own superintendent and administrative costs, yet some are unable to provide a full range of academic offerings for their students.

The State Education Department and a special Statewide Advisory Committee on School District Reorganization asked CGR to determine whether the state's policy preference of consolidation of districts is always the best answer to the problem.



Overall, we found a demonstrated need for change and greater efficiency in how New York provides educational services. The question is whether or not consolidation of school districts is always the answer or whether other approaches would sometimes make more sense.

Too often, districts merge primarily to obtain generous state incentive aid. However, there is growing evidence nationally in support of a variety of other forms of school reorganization such as service sharing and other collaborations between districts.

Sharing of services and resources across districts and between districts and businesses, municipalities, and colleges, is a viable alternative to consolidation. One promising option involves creating federations of school districts. In this plan, individual school districts are maintained and retain local control of the academic program, but a federation board makes decisions affecting groups of districts. Districts of varying sizes and those in rural areas can benefit by the cost savings which can result from such collaborative efforts.

Note: See Maine's ECO 2000 as possible federation.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

DISTANCE LEARNING/COMPUTERS

It should be noted that although these examples address curriculum, they also point to sharing of services with others and address the problem of involving others such as universities, industry, and other schools with the district.

➡ Project Connect — State of New York

Project Connect is a state-of-the-art interactive video network that utilizes NYNEX fiberoptic technology to link city, rural and suburban high schools, Buffalo State College and Western New York Public Broadcasting (WNED-17). *Project Connect* allows a student in Franklinville, for example, to work with a student located as far away as Williamsville in the same course, at the same time. Student and the instructor can see and speak to one another over video. Instructions include: College level courses in math, science, English, arts, humanities and language.

➡ Students to learn health habits through Internet — State of Virginia

Virginia Tech has developed an Internet module on healthy hearts for elementary and middle school children. Children can also monitor water quality, forest and wildlife. Teachers can take courses by computer in literature, political theory, and earn a Master's Degree. Tech's cyberschool uses technology to enhance courses.



PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING

➡ Minneapolis Public Strategies Group — State of Minnesota

In 1993, the private firm Public Strategies Group was hired to serve as superintendent and manage the daily operation of the school district. PSG's compensation is determined by how well they meet performance objectives set out in their contract. In its first two years, the company earned 63% of possible compensation. For the 1995-96 school year they earned \$323,000 out of a possible \$366,000. Increase compensation was due to increased success in meeting delineated district goals. Opponents of pay-for-performance measures will go to great lengths to discredit their effectiveness, even going so far as to abdicate all responsibility for academic outcomes. The idea of performance contracting has drawn the heaviest criticism from teachers' unions.



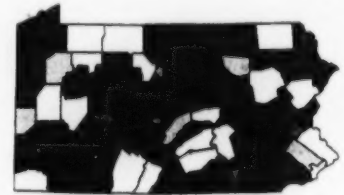
RESEARCH SUMMARY

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/SHARING

Community involvement initiatives are vital to districts due to the service and vast savings that volunteers provide. The importance of this involvement can be seen in districts that can validate the equivalent cost of volunteer hours exceeding one million dollars. Many schools have determined volunteer hours equal four or more full-time employees that the district could not afford otherwise. The Independent Sector of Washington, D.C. has listed the rate of \$12.84 per hour for volunteer time. Awareness of this great need will encourage people to get involved and stay involved.

➡ Joint School and Department (Sharing) — State of Pennsylvania

Sec. 1701 — Establishment. The Board of School Directors of any two school districts or more may establish, with the approval of the Department of Public Instruction, a joint department. The cost, including cost of transportation, shall be paid by the several districts establishing the same.



Sec. 1703 — Written Agreement. Agreement must be entered in their respective minutes. They can be dissolved again by written agreement.

Sec. 706 — Building & Grounds. Any school district shall have the power to join with any city, borough, incorporated town, township, county or any combination, in equipping, operating, and maintaining parks, playgrounds, play fields, gymnasiums, public baths, and indoor recreation centers.

Sec. 709 — Lease of unused and unnecessary land and building. Can be leased for any lawful purpose other than educational.

NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

The New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources was created by the State Legislature in 1982. Consisting of ten members of the Senate and Assembly, the bipartisan Commission promotes a state-level focus and avenue for creating and evaluating rural development policy. Among other activities, the Commission sponsors legislation to enhance and protect rural resources.

Senator Charles D. Cook, Chairman
Assemblyman William Magee, Vice-Chairman

Senate Members:	Mary Lou Rath	Assembly Members:	Jacob E. Gunther, III
	James W. Wright		Martin A. Luster
	Nancy Lorraine Hoffmann		Patricia K. McGee
			Chloe Ann O'Neil

Rural Education Advisory Committee

The Rural Education Advisory Committee was created in 1990 as a result of legislation sponsored by the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. This Advisory Committee is a public/private collaborative body whose mission is to identify and disseminate information about rural education and to increase opportunities for rural students, families, and communities through the pursuit of excellence and equity for all rural students.

The Committee focuses its research upon school districts in rural areas in New York State. The Legislature has defined rural areas to include all communities within the 44 counties which have a population of less than 200,000 and within sparsely populated towns in larger counties. There are 401 school districts identified in rural areas of the state.

Mr. Charles H. Bohlen, Jr., Chairman

Judith Duken
James Hill

Michael Joseph, Jr.
George Mack

Ronald Dougherty
Ruth Henry

Advisors

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For additional information, contact the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources at (518)455-2544.